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FOSTER'S American Leads

AND HOW TO
LEARN THEM

BY THE AUTHOR OF

FOSTER'S WHIST MANUAL

BRENTANO'S



C. W. Harris 1894

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AMERICAN LEADS

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Robert Frederick Foster



BRENTANO'S

NEW YORK CHICAGO WASHINGTON

1894

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~~Dr. L. O. Howard~~
Dec 19/27



AMERICAN LEADS.

The term, "American Leads," is somewhat vague, the name being often applied to leads that were in common use long before the expression came into vogue. Generally speaking, American Leads are all those which have for their chief object the indication of the number of cards in the suit, and they are governed by the following four rules, three of which I quote from an article by Mr. N. B. Trist. in *Harper's*, for March, 1891; the fourth being my own statement of a rule not yet formulated by the apostles of these leads:—

1st. When you open a strong suit with a low card, lead the 4th-best.

2nd. When you open a strong suit with a high card, and next lead a low card, lead the original 4th-best.

3rd. When you remain with two high indifferent cards, lead the higher, if you opened a suit of four; the lower, if you opened a suit of more than four.

4th. Never lead a King if you have more than four cards of the suit.

The first rule seems to have had its origin away back in the days of "Cam," who led the lowest

but one of five, long before Cavendish had written his first edition. General Drayson claims the invention of the second ; and the third was suggested by Cavendish, in 1875, in connection with the lead from A Q J and others. The term "American Leads" did not come into use for any system of leading until ten years later, when in 1885 Cavendish published his "Whist Developments," using the name as a sub-title. This work contained nothing new in the way of leads, its chief novelty being what is called the unblocking game, or the plain-suit echo. The fourth rule was not even hinted at.

It must therefore be obvious that none of the leads covered by the first three "maxims," as they are called, have any right to the title "American" having been all suggested by Englishmen, and all being in more or less common use long before the term was applied to them. They have now so long been an integral part of the common system of leading that they are given in all text-books on whist as a matter of course.

It is when we come to the fourth rule that we reach the peculiar and distinguishing characteristic of the system of leading which we recognize as "American." I have repeatedly called attention to the fact that the name is a misnomer, and that these should be called the "anti-King leads."

Their enthusiastic advocates are in the habit of claiming that "all the best players have adopted American Leads," which is quite true with regard to the first three rules, but quite false with regard to the fourth. The leads covered by the first three having nothing peculiar about them, and being those which are given in full in "Foster's Whist Manual," it is not my purpose to repeat them here, but to confine our attention to the leads which are specifically recognized as "modern," or "American," although they appear to have had their origin in England also, their conception being clearly traceable to four paragraphs of doubtful logic on page 83 of the first edition of "Whist Developments."

It is remarkable that a writer of the calibre and caution of Cavendish should have allowed himself to become responsible for the far-reaching consequences of a rather hasty and very incomplete analysis of the results of unblocking on a King led; and it is to be regretted that instead of correcting his error, and recommending a harmonious and universal system of unblocking on all high cards, he should have attempted to force two wrongs to make a right, by suggesting to change the whole system of leading from high cards, in order to avoid the necessity of acknowledging his error.

Having the ear of the public, and being the

recognized authority on the subject throughout the world, his statement of the case was taken without question. Compilers of text-books on whist and contributors to the press copied it without comment, and in the course of time Cavendish embodied the proposed changes in the leads in his "Laws and Principles of Whist," twentieth edition. While this had no apparent effect on the players in England, where the system recommended had been pretty thoroughly tried, and its defects recognized, it became quite a fad in America, chiefly, I believe, if not wholly, on account of the patriotism inspired by the name given to it, "*American*" leads.

The result has been that many American whist-players have almost entirely lost sight of the original object of the game, which was to win as many tricks as possible, and have substituted another object, to give as much information as possible, regardless of loss or gain, so that by many persons Whist, properly so called, is no longer played.

Information, and not tricks, being the object of the game, it follows that it is no disadvantage for the information to be published to the whole table, and that whether it is of any *practical* use to the partner, or of less use to him than to his adversaries, is not the question. According to one of the best-known apostles of this system of

play, "the best players are those who afford the most *information* by their play."

It may be contended that the ultimate object of the giving of this information is to secure an advantage in tricks. I admit that that is the theory; but a theory that does not agree with the ascertained facts must be false, and in every instance where the experiment has been tried, it has been proved that "information" is a trick-losing game. It was tried for three years by the various clubs in Philadelphia, and in every instance the old leads defeated the new. See *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1889 to 1891. Four of the best players in America tried a set match to decide on the merits of the anti-King leads, and their advocates lost it by thirteen tricks. See "Whist," April, 1893, p. 166. When it was announced that the two great high priests of the anti-King leads, Cavendish and N. B. Trist, were to play together as partners at the Third American Whist Congress in Chicago, it was generally supposed that they would annihilate any two players that could be opposed to them. So far from that being the case, they met with uninterrupted defeat in every match in which they took part, although the players opposed to them had no claim to being in the first class. All these matches were at duplicate whist.

It is in response to the requests of numerous

pupils, and to the demands of my publishers that I have undertaken the task of arranging a simple method of learning this new form of game, which I call "Information," on the same general principles as those which have proved so successful in "Foster's Whist Manual."

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF INFORMATION.

I wish to call attention to a very common error with regard to the anti-King leads, which is contained in the statement made by their advocates that any person learning what they call the "old" system of leads will have to "unlearn" it in order to acquire the new. But no one can play the "new" leads with less than five cards of the suit in his hand ; so, in order to play the much more common four-card suits, every one must learn the "old" system, which is still considered by the best judges as the better of the two. Before any person can acquire, or even understand, the "new" leads, they must be familiar with the system given in "Foster's Whist Manual."

The fundamental principle to be kept in view by the "Information" player is that the weak-

ness or strength of his hand, the ever-varying abilities of his partners and opponents, the state of the score, and the turn-up card, must have no influence whatever in determining his opening or original lead, or his play in the adverse suits. These must be settled by purely mechanical rules, of sufficient exactness to guide the most brainless automaton.

These rules are as follows :

1st. The strongest suit must invariably be selected for the opening lead ; numerical strength being usually the point considered.

2nd. Time is no object. So that the desired information has been conveyed before the thirteenth trick is played to, the play of the hand is to be commended. It follows that if a player could give an amount of information on the first trick, which we shall call equal to 4, and on the tenth trick could add to it, making its total value equal to 5, he would not be so good a player as one who gave no information until the tenth trick, and then gave some of the total value of 6. That is to say, if on the first trick of the hand you can show your partner that you have a suit of at least four cards, with sufficient trump strength and cards of re-entry to justify you in expecting to make something of it, with *reasonable* help from him, and on the tenth trick you have added nothing to this information except

that your suit is safe, thanks to his having been encouraged to play a forward game, you are not so good a player as one who can show his partner nothing on the first trick except that the card led was one of the thirteen dealt to him, but by the tenth trick has shown that he had six cards of the suit originally led, and that he had no trumps to support it, no cards of re-entry to bring it in, and that his partner's frantic sacrifices of his own hand to protect this six-card suit were a sad waste of energy.

3rd. The exact number of cards in the *suit* led must be indicated as far as possible, and this must be considered as more important than any indication of the general strength or weakness of the *hand*. In order to do this it may be necessary entirely to disregard the reasons which formerly obtained for first leading certain cards from certain combinations, and to arrange the original leads solely with a view to the *second* lead, which may be necessary in order to make the first intelligible.

4th. The exact number of cards held in the adversaries' suits must be indicated with scrupulous exactness, in order that your partner may be enabled to count what you have or have not in that and *other* suits. For instance: If your left-hand adversary leads the Club ace, and you, having Queen Jack only, throw the Queen to in-

duce him to change the suit or to lead trumps, either of which will exactly suit your hand, and will probably result in a gain in tricks if the stratagem succeeds, you are not so good a player as one who entirely disregards the trick-making possibilities of his hand, but carefully indicates to his partner that he has King Queen, or Queen alone, or no more Clubs, or in any case, that ten at least of his remaining cards are *not* Clubs.

5th. Frequent defeat, even at duplicate whist, is no criterion of good play. If you have whist-players for opponents, who give no exact indication of the number of cards in their suits, and who mercilessly humbug you by playing false cards in yours, so as to render the information you seek to give and to receive from your partner utterly worthless and misleading, that does not detract from your merit as a player. "The best players are those that *afford* the most information"; not those that receive it, nor those that use it.

It will be noticed that in the "new" leads no provision is made for giving any information as to whether or not there is any probability of the leader being able to establish, defend, or bring in the suit he originally leads, which would be most useful in directing the partner to play an offensive or a defensive game. That would be an indication of the trick-taking possibilities of

the hand, which is Whist, not Information. The student who is interested in the possibilities of such a system of communication, and the many charming varieties of the game to which it leads, is referred to "Foster's Whist Strategy," where it is fully explained.

THE NEW LEADS.

The student of Information, who is supposed to be already familiar with the usual system of leading at Whist, has only the four following combinations to study afresh :

No. 1.					
No. 2.					
No. 3.					
No. 4.					

The leads from these four combinations are governed by the fourth rule of American Leads :

“Never lead a King if you have more than four cards of the suit.”

This rule being merely negative, I have found it necessary to give my pupils some further guide, which I have formulated thus :

When you have a combination from which you would lead the King but for the number of cards in the suit, *begin with the lowest of the sequence of high cards.*

The student must bear in mind that in the new leads, the *ten* and all cards below it are regarded as *small*.

Take an ordinary pack of cards and lay these four combinations out on the table. Then apply these two rules with a view of ascertaining what you would lead from any one of them, either in trumps or plain suits.

In the first place, from none of them would you lead the King, so that card may be disregarded as a possibility.

From the first combination, the Jack being the lowest of the sequence of high cards should be first led.

From the second combination, the Queen being the lowest of the sequence of high cards should be first led.

From the third combination, as the King must not be led, the Ace is the only remaining card of the high sequence, and should be first led.

From the fourth combination, the King being unavailable, the Queen should be first led.

For practice, take a pack of cards from which all below the nine have been discarded, and give yourself several hands of thirteen at a time. Sort them into suits, and determine what you would lead if any of these four combinations come into your hand.

PLAYING ON PARTNER'S LEADS.

Let us now imagine that you are the partner of a player that adopts this system of leading, and let us see how it would affect your play as third hand.

ACE LED.

Sort your pack of cards into suits, separating them. Then take any one of these suits and place on the table opposite you, as if led by your partner, the Ace. Place some small indifferent card, to represent the play of the Second Hand, on your right. From the remaining eleven cards take into your hand, one at a time, each of the combinations here given, and ask yourself:

“From what combination of cards did my partner lead that Ace?”

No. 1.	K Q J 3		No. 5.	Q J 4 2
No. 2.	K Q 7 3		No. 6.	Q 6 4 2
No. 3.	K J 7 3		No. 7.	J 6 4 2
No. 4.	K 7 6 3		No. 8.	8 6 4 2

It must be constantly kept in mind that your partner has not always a suit of five cards to lead from, and that when you hold either the 4th or 8th combination allowance must be made for the fact that he may be leading from a suit of three or four only; such as A Q J alone, or A Q J and one small card. But it may be taken for granted that if you hold either Q or J he is leading from a suit of at least five cards, whether with or without the King you cannot tell unless you hold it yourself; so that you have no indication as to whether the command of the suit is with or against him.

It is your duty as his partner to keep the lowest card you have of the suit when you have four exactly, no matter what they are; but with more or less than four you should play your lowest card on your partner's Ace led. In trumps, the usual system of echoing must be followed, which will be found fully explained in “F. W. M.,” p. 114.

KING LED.

Sort out another suit, and lay the King and a small card on the table as before. From the eleven remaining cards of the suit take any combination, and ask yourself: "From what did my partner lead that King?" The first answer to this must always be: "From a suit of not more than four cards." As this must be one of the regular whist leads, he must have either Ace or Queen; see "F. W. M.," p. 29.

In Information, you must always play your lowest card of the suit to a King led by your partner, no matter what or how many you hold, so as to give him as little information as possible. *Whist*-players echo, or unblock, on a King led when they have four or more of the suit, as they think it very important that a player leading from such strong combinations as are usually indicated by a King should have every possible indication of how the small cards of the suit are distributed.

QUEEN LED.

Now lay out the Queen and a small card, and give yourself any of the following combinations, asking yourself what your partner probably led from :—

No. 1.	A K 4 2		No. 4.	A J 5 3
No. 2.	A 6 4 2		No. 5.	J 7 5 3
No. 3.	K 6 4 2		No. 6.	7 5 4 3

If you hold the first combination, you know that he has led from Q J and one small card, or from Q J 10 with or without others. If the latter, he may have only three in the suit; or he may have eight. If you hold the second combination, he may have led from a short suit or a long one; from a suit headed by the King or by the Queen. You know little or nothing, except that he has led a Queen. If you hold the third combination, you know he has led from Q J, with or without the 10, perhaps from a short suit, perhaps from a long one. If you hold the fourth or fifth combinations, you know he has led from K Q, with at least five cards in the suit, unless he is one of those who believe in leading "strengthening Queens." [When Information players have no suit of five cards they do funny

things.] If you hold the sixth combination, you know nothing except that he has led a Queen. The Ace is so frequently held up by the adversaries on a Queen led, if they are *Whist*-players, that it is not safe to draw any inferences from this lead, not even if it wins the trick. When a *Whist*-player leads a Queen, it is a *certainty* that he has no higher card of the suit in his hand, and it is perfectly useless for the adversaries to try to deceive his partner by holding up the Ace.

It is your duty as the partner of a player leading a Queen, to remain perfectly passive and to await developments. If you have none of the suit you must not trump the Queen, no matter how many or how few trumps you have, unless the Second Hand covers it. If you have exactly four cards of the suit, no court card among them, keep the lowest of your four. If you have a court card, play the lowest, whatever the number.

Whist-players, when they have none of the suit, trump a Queen led by their partners, unless they are certain that they can make at least three tricks by allowing the adversaries a chance to make two with the Ace and King.

JACK LED.

Now lay out the Jack and a small card, and take any of the following combinations into your hand :

No. 1. A K Q 2		No. 5. K 7 5 3
No. 2. A K 4 2		No. 6. Q 7 5 3
No. 3. K 6 4 2		No. 7. A 7 5 3
No. 4. K Q 7 3		No. 8. 8 7 5 3

Holding any of the first six of these, and in every case in which the second player covers the Jack with any card but the Ace, it must be obvious that the lead is forced. If you hold either of the last two, the lead *may* be from K Q J with at least five in suit. If you hold the eighth, it may be from A K Q J, with at least five in suit. The location of the Ace is always doubtful with Information players, that card being so frequently held up as a card of re-entry, or to deceive the partner of the leader as to the command of the suit. When a *Whist*-player leads a Jack it is a *certainty* that he has not the Ace, so it is of no use to attempt to deceive his partner by holding it up.

It must be obvious to the attentive student that on the first round of a suit the "new" leads give about as little information as possible, and

that it would be folly for the third hand to risk an attacking game, as by leading or calling for trumps, unless his own hand justified it, apart from any indications from his partner. The usual policy of Information players is to wait for the second round of the suit to explain the first. This second round may follow at once, presently, or not until the hand is practically over. In any case it is too late to begin a call in a suit which will have to go round three times to complete it. The system always reminds me of the English practice of remitting money by cutting bank-notes in half, waiting for the receipt of the first half to be acknowledged before sending the other; the two halves meanwhile being absolutely valueless to either party in the transaction.

Let us turn our attention to the second half.

THE SECOND ROUND OF THE SUIT.

Let us suppose that you won the first round of the suit you selected for your original lead, and that you have to go on. Lay out these four combinations again :—

No. 1.					
No. 2.					
No. 3.					
No. 4.					

The general rule for continuing a suit, supposing it to be desirable to continue it, is to go on with the best card of it if you hold it. Having several, equally the best, the Information player follows this rule:—

Make the long jump for the short suit, and the short jump for the long suit. The jumps are counted from the card first led, which, as we have already seen, is always the lowest of the high cards.

Let us examine these four combinations in order, beginning with the first.

The shortest suit with which it is possible to play the “new” leads is one of five cards. The longest jump you can make in the first combination is from the Jack, which is first led, to the

Ace. With the second combination, the longest jump you can make is from the Queen to the Ace. With the third combination, the only winning card left in your hand after leading the Ace is the King. With the fourth combination, if the Queen forces the Ace out of your way, the only winning card to go on with is the King. If the Queen wins the first trick you are supposed to take it for granted that the Ace is in your partner's hand, and to follow the second rule of American Leads: "When you open a strong suit with a high card, and next lead a low card, lead your original fourth-best." See "Cavendish," nineteenth edition, p. 282.

Many Information players do not follow this rule exactly, but ignore the King, and count the 4th-best from the Queen originally led, which, in the combination before us on the table, would be the 3. Mr. Trist gives as a reason for this that the higher card is supposed to be known (a grave error), and that the lead of the 4th-best from the Queen would indicate that there are two other small cards, but higher than the one now led, still in the leader's hand. It is worthy of note that Cavendish, after advocating it for years, does not now think the second rule of American Leads sound, and refuses to embody it in his *Laws and Principles*.

Let us add a card to each of our combinations,

and we shall find that the only ones in which any change in the second lead is possible are the 1st and 2nd.



In the first combination, your suit is one card longer, and you accordingly make your jump one card shorter, from the Jack to the King, instead of to the Ace.

In the second combination, your suit being one card longer the jump must be one card shorter, from the Queen to the King, instead of to the Ace.

The possibilities of the first combination are not yet exhausted. We may add another card :—



The suit being now two cards longer than the normal, which is five, the jump must be two cards shorter, from the Jack to the Queen.

When the student has mastered these leads he will be in full possession of all the theory and practice of "modern" whist.

PLAY OF THE THIRD HAND.

In the following exercises we shall suppose that certain cards are led by your partner, and certain others held by you. Our object is to gain facility in drawing inferences from the leads we are studying, and to practice affording information in return. I wish again to call attention to the fact that you are not now considering what *use* you are to make of this information, but simply and only the mental satisfaction to be derived from receiving and imparting it.

INFERENCES.

The cards given in full-faced type should be taken into the hand; those indicated as played by others being placed in their proper positions on the table. Some persons find it an advantage to place a duplicate whist tray on the table, arranging the cards round it as if that game were in actual progress.

The student should remember that the trump signal being the exception, not the rule, all general inferences should be drawn as if no such artifice existed. Make your own inferences before reading mine.

K 7 4 2. A led; 6 2nd; 4 yours; 5 4th. Your partner may be leading from a short suit, A Q J. He should be able to place the 2 in your hand, and know that you are echoing with four exactly. Second round: 8 led; J 2nd; your K; 10 4th. You and your partner should now be equally certain that you hold the remainder of the suit between you.

J 2. A led; 5 2nd; your 2; 4 4th. Your partner must have at least five of the suit; you holding J. He may or may not have the King. By your 2 he knows you are not echoing. Second round: 7 led; K 2nd; your J; 6 4th. Your partner had exactly five of the suit. The player on your left, or your partner, has the Q; and one or other of the adversaries has the 8, 9, or 10. Your partner does not know that you have no more; neither can he locate the Q, unless he has it; but he knows that the 8, 9, or 10 is with the adversaries, not with you.

J 9 4 2. K led; 5 2nd; your 2; 3 4th. Your partner has only four cards of the suit, one of which is the A. You know that the adversaries have three more between them, but your partner knows nothing whatever. Second round: Q led; 6 2nd; your 4; 10 4th. You know that the player on your left has no more, your partner has the A, and either 7 or 8 is on your right, alone, if your partner had four originally. Your

partner still knows nothing. Had you echoed, he could now place every card in the suit.

9 5 4 3. Q led ; 2 2nd ; your 4 ; 7 4th. It is probable that your partner has A K, but A is so often held up that it is not a reliable inference. The *whist*-player's lead of a Q gives absolute information that both A and K are against. Your partner cannot tell you are echoing. Second round : A led ; 2nd trumps ; your 5 ; 10 4th. Your partner now knows you have the 9 and 3, and that the J is on your left. You can locate the J, for your partner would have begun with it if he had it. Observe that the player on your left knows the location of every card just as well as you do. Your partner's leads showing no more than five, you must have four, and he can force his partner again with absolute safety that you cannot overtrump.

J 7 5. Q led ; A 2nd ; your 5 ; 6 4th. Your partner has at least five in suit, with the K ; but neither you nor he have the slightest idea of the distribution of the other cards. On getting the lead again, he continues with the K ; 3 2nd ; your 7 ; 10 4th. Still your partner knows nothing ; not even that you are not echoing. You do not know whether he had five or six in suit originally.

A 3 2. Q led ; 7 2d ; your 2 ; 5 4th. You cannot tell whether your partner is leading from

a short suit, Q high, or a long suit, K high. He should assume that you have the Ace. He knows you are not echoing, but does not know that you have not four cards of the suit with an honor among them. Second round : 4 led ; J 2nd ; your A ; 6 4th. Your partner has continued with the 4th-best, ignoring the high card, which he supposes you to know he holds. So he held exactly five cards of the suit. You know the 8, 9, or 10 is against him on your left. He only knows that the second hand has no more.

6 5. Q led ; 3 2nd ; your 5 ; 2 4th. Unless your partner has the 4 he cannot tell you are not echoing. Now that the 4th hand has played, it looks as if the leader had A K Q ; but it would have been very risky for you to begin a call on that assumption if you had had trumps to support such a suit, as you cannot suppress a call with two cards only. Second round : A led ; 2nd trumps ; your 6 ; 4 4th. Your partner knows nothing about your hand, and you know nothing about the rank of his two small cards. The player on your left, your *adversary*, knows every card in your partner's hand, and knows you have no more.

J 10 9 2. Q led ; 6 2nd ; your 2 ; 8 4th. The player on your left has no more if your partner has A K. On your right can be only the 7, if

any. Your partner is totally ignorant of anything about any hand at the table but his own. Second round: K led; 7 2nd; your 9; 4th trumps. The player on your right, your *adversary*, knows every card in both your hands. Your partner knows nothing of the J and 10.

10 6 4 2. J led; 7 2nd; your 4; 5 4th. The J winning should indicate A K Q; but the information is too late to be of any use, for you had to play before you knew it would win. Second round: A led; 8 2nd; your 6; 4th trumps. Every one at the table knows you are echoing; for if your partner had exactly five in the suit he cannot have both the 2 and 3. Your left-hand adversary knows his partner has still one more of the suit, as he can count you and your partner for exactly nine between you.

It must be obvious from the preceding exercises that the case is correctly stated by Cavenish, on page 31 of the fourth edition of "Whist Developments" when he says: "The information required by B [*i. e.* the third hand], is always afforded on the *second* round of the suit." After eight cards have been played, and the leader has announced the exact number remaining in his hand, a good deal of information has been "afforded" to every one at the table, and usually by those who can least "afford" it.

THE SECOND HAND.

The only object the second hand should have in studying the new leads is to take advantage of the information they afford.

Q 3 2. A led; your 2; 6 3rd; 9 4th. You know the leader has at least five in suit. The location of the K is known only to its holder. The leader cannot tell whether or not his partner is echoing; if he is, your partner has no more. Second round: K led; your 3; J 3rd; 10 4th. You are the only player that can place the suit. The leader had no means of indicating to his partner that he had a six-card suit; but only that the command of it is now against him, with which adversary neither he nor his partner knows.

K 10 7 6. A led; your 6; 4 3rd; 5 4th. The leader is the only player who can gain any information from this trick. He should be able to place the 2 and 3. Second round: Q led. The leader announcing four cards only, cannot have both 2 and 3; so his partner must be echoing with four, and your partner has no more. So you play your 7, allowing your partner to trump and to leave you with tenace, K 10, over the leader's J and small.

A J. K led; your A; 4 3rd; 10 4th. You can locate every card in the suit. The leader shows

that he had only four, Q among them. His small cards are the 2 and 3; your partner has no more; and there are still five cards of the suit on your left. It is important to observe that should this player on your left obtain the lead, and show a suit of his own, you can count his entire hand, thanks to his partner's having exposed it. For instance: Suppose you lead another suit, which he wins, and he then shows a five-card suit. He can have but one trump, if any! This should be very useful to you should trumps be led.

6 4. Q led; your 4; 3 3rd; 2 4th. They command the entire suit, and third hand is not echoing. Second round; K led; your 6; 7 3rd; 5 4th. Leader has A 10 9 8. The J being doubtful, you should pass with four trumps if the suit is led again; for if your partner has not the J he will trump; and if he has it, you will be overtrumped by the third hand.

A J 9 2. Q led. With so many in the suit you should play the Ace unless you have strong reasons for retaining it; 8 3rd; 3 4th. The leader had at least five cards of the suit. His partner has the 10 or no more, and your partner has either 10 and 4, or the 4 alone. You are the only player at the table that knows anything about the suit. The leader does not know that his partner is not echoing. The third hand does not know whether the lead is from a long suit

headed by K Q, or from a short one, headed by Q J. After the second round you will command the suit with your J 9.

It is to be observed that if the leader begins with a suit in which he shows five cards, as by leading an A, you being able to place J or Q, and for any reason changes the suit, and shows four of another, you know nine cards of his hand.

Advocates of the new leads sometimes realize how much more important it is to show command on the first lead, and they accordingly disregard the fourth "maxim." In one of the earliest hands played by Cavendish during his visit to this country, he successively led two Kings, from two suits of five cards each, headed by the A, to the consternation of the many spectators, who wanted to see some American leads. In illustrative hand No. 20, in his twentieth edition, a player with A K J 4 3 2 leads the King! The hand would be a farce, as an example of good whist, if he led the Ace. I have seen a player with seven clubs, K Q at the top, Q and a small diamond, 10 9 8 of spades, and one small trump, lead the K, to show the Q for one sure trick. His two diamonds fell; his spades could be counted, and his partner, counting him for *four* clubs only, placed *four* trumps in his hand and lost three tricks. If you once begin

“Information” you must stand by it, even if you lose every game you play. If you “show five” one hand, and show command another, you will drive your partner mad.

If a game depends for its success upon the accuracy of the information given and received by the partners, one of the chief objects of the adversaries must be to make that information as unreliable and misleading as possible. With this end in view many of the best players have adopted a systematic course of false-card play second and fourth hand. This feature was especially noticeable in the play of the Minneapolis team, which won the Forrest Trophy at the Third Whist Congress in Chicago. When they had three or four small cards of the adverse suit they retained the smallest, rendering it impossible for the leader and his partner to draw any reliable inferences. There is nothing so effective at Whist as a false card, well played.

The student who is interested in the policy of deception is referred to “Foster’s Whist Strategy.”

IN CONCLUSION.

I trust that it is quite unnecessary for me to say that I do not approve of Information and American Leads as a game. Information is not Whist, and American Leads are simply a mass of contradictions. They are not American at all, but English. Those who advocate them call their rules "maxims"; but a maxim is "a principle generally received or admitted as true," which is very far from the case with these leads. They are called "modern," but the principle of them was first suggested 90 years ago. They are called "scientific"; but they will not stand the most superficial comparative analysis. They are said to give "fuller and clearer information than the old leads"; but it has been conclusively shown that they do not give as much. They are said to be "the most perfect, harmonious, and complete system of play ever invented;" but every one of their advocates has some improvement to suggest, especially in the Queen leads. Their father and godfather cannot agree as to whether the second "maxim" is unutterably good or hopelessly bad. Cavendish, in the appendix to the twentieth edition, seems to think it gives *too much* information to the adversaries, especially in enabling them to finesse successfully. This does not quite agree with his statement that:

“It seems unlikely that a player will be at a disadvantage, in the long run, because he imparts *too much* information.”—“Whist Developments,” fourth edition, p. 2. These leads are said to have “been adopted by all the best players”; but they have lost every match at duplicate whist in which they have been explicitly opposed to the old leads. The team that won the championship for fours in 1892 and for pairs in 1893, absolutely refuses to have anything to do with them. Their high priest praises them simply because they are conventions which give “fuller and clearer information.” This does not agree with his statement that “no such conventions should be allowed in Whist,” and that: “Conventions for the purpose of giving information only, are decidedly objectionable.”—*Brooklyn Eagle*, Nov. 20, 1893.

I do not for a moment believe that a system so full of absurd contradictions would receive so much attention in America were it not for its name. But so strongly rooted in the American heart are the virtues of patriotism and respect for authority, that I believe if Cavendish were to suggest that the trump suit should have no especial value after the sixth trick, and should call it “United States Whist,” it would soon supersede all other forms of the game, even its latest and worst, “Information with American Leads.”

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